

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:EW-OLLIS:SEH

APPROVED BY AF:EWMULCAHY

AF/W:TWMSMITH

S/S :REWOODS

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R 311840Z JAN 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

S E C R E T STATE 024906

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PFOR, ENRG, NI, AN, US

SUBJECT:VISIT TO U.S. BY NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER FOR
PETROLEUM AND ENERGY

SUMMARY: DR. AKOBO, THE NIGERIAN OIL COMMISSIONER
(MINISTER), MADE SURPRISE VISIT TO WASHINGTON JANUARY
24-26 AND ATTENDED CONFERENCE ON OPEC IN HOUSTON JANUARY
27-28. DURING CALL ON DEPARTMENT ORCHESTRATED BY KOREAN
BUSINESSMAN TONGSUN PARK, AKOBO OFFERED TO HELP USG
COMMUNICATE WITH MPLA AND COMMENTED ON NIGERIAN LNG AND
REFINING PROJECTS.

1) AF SURPRISED JANUARY 26 BY REQUEST FROM PRIVATE
AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN FOR APPOINTMENT THAT MORNING FOR
DR. M.T.O. AKOBO, NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER FOR PETROLEUM
AND ENERGY. AFTER AKOBO AND TWO ASSOCIATES RECEIVED BY
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MULCAHY, HE REVEALED THAT
PURPOSE OF CALL ON AF WAS TO OFFER UNOFFICIAL CHANNEL
OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH MPLA. HIS RATIONALE WAS THAT LACK
OF CONTACT WITH WESTERN POWERS LIKELY TO MAKE MPLA IN-
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CREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON SOVIET UNION. SINCE FMG MAIN-

TAINED RELATIONS WITH MPLA GOVERNMENT AND AKOBO HAD HIMSELF BEEN TWICE VISITED BY MPLA PRIME MINISTER, PERHAPS HE COULD SERVE USG BY PUTTING US SECRETLY IN CONTACT WITH MPLA.

2) AKOBO EMPHASIZED THAT NIGERIAN EMBASSY NOT AWARE OF HIS APPROACH, AND HE ASKED THAT WE COMMUNICATE OUR RESPONSE, IF ANY, BEFORE HE RETURNS TO NIGERIA. HE SAID HE WOULD BE IN HOUSTON JANUARY 27-29, ABU DHABI JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 3, AND LONDON FEBRUARY 4-5. OUR REPLY WAS NON-COMMITAL, AND NO FURTHER CONTACT WAS MADE WITH HIM IN U.S. SUBSEQUENT CANCELLATION OF OPEC MEETING IN ABU DHABI HAS UNDOUBTEDLY CAUSED HIM TO ALTER HIS TRAVEL PLANS. END SECRET

3) BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. ACCORDING NIGERIAN EMBASSY, AKOBO AND ONE AIDE(O. LOLOMARI) ARRIVED WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE ON EVENING OF JANUARY 23. IN ABSENCE OF NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR (WHO WAS IN CHICAGO) DCM ENTERTAINED AKOBO AND LOLOMARI TO LUNCHEON ON SUNDAY JANUARY 25 AT WHICH ONLY AMERICAN GUESTS WERE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS REINHARDT AND HUD ASSISTANT SECRETARY CRAWFORD. AFTER VISITING DEPARTMENT, AKOBO PAID COURTESY CALLS ON FEA ADMINISTRATOR ZARB AND ON DEPARTMENT OF

THE INTERIOR UNDER SECRETARY KENT FRIZZELL. AKOBO AND LOLOMARI, ACCOMPANIED BY ECON COUNSELOR ANI, DEPARTED AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 26 FOR HOUSTON WHERE THEY ATTENDED CONFERENCE ON OPEC NATIONS ORGANIZED BY PRIVATE COMPANY.

4) AKOBO ACCOMPANIED DURING CALL AT DEPARTMENT BY WILLIAM E. TIMMONS (FORMER WHITE HOUSE LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT) AND SOUTH KOREAN BUSINESSMAN TONGSUN PARK. LATTER IS PRESIDENT OF PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT, INC., WASHINGTON-BASED FIRM WITH INTERESTS IN SHIPPING, OIL, AND GRAIN. PARK APPEARS FREQUENTLY ON WASHINGTON POST SOCIETY PAGE, IS INVOLVED IN REAL ESTATE, AND IS SAID TO OWN THE PRESTIGIOUS GEORGETOWN CLUB ON WISCONSIN AVENUE. HE HAS BEEN PROMOTING DEALS WITH NIGERIA FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR.

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5) DURING CALL ON DEPARTMENT, AKOBO NOT PARTICULARLY IMPRESSIVE. MUCH OF WHAT WAS SAID ABOUT ANGOLA AND ABOUT BUSINESS IN NIGERIA WAS ARTICULATED BY PARK, THEN ASSENTED TO BY AKOBO. ABOUT NIGERIA, PARK REVEALED THAT THE COMMISSIONER FAVORED NEITHER SHELL-BP NOR PHILLIPS/AGIP BUT HAD DECIDED THAT FIRST LNG EXPORT FACILITY WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED AND OPERATED BY TENNECO. HE ALSO SAID THE COMMISSIONER HAD CHOSEN OCCIDENTAL

PETROLEUM OVER OPPOSITION OF HIS STAFF TO BUILD KADUNA REFINERY. TWO MEMCONS BEING POUCHED.

6) ON SUNDAY WITHOUT PARK, AKOBO HAD SAID THAT LNG PROJECT STYMIED FOR ECONOMIC REASONS, I.E. QUOTE NOT ENOUGH MONEY IN IT FOR US UNQUOTE. HE ADDED THAT QUOTE IF WE CAN FIND A PLACE TO SEND OUR GAS, MAYBE WE CAN GET THE PROJECT UNDERWAY UNQUOTE. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

7) BEGIN SECRET. COMMENT: EXTENT TO WHICH AKOBO'S OFFER TO INTERCEDE WITH THE MPLA MAY HAVE BEEN COORDINATED WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF FMG NEVER MADE CLEAR. WE CONCLUDE THAT HE WAS PROBABLY SPEAKING ONLY FOR HIMSELF AND THAT HIS INITIATIVE MAY HAVE NOT EVEN BEEN CONSIDERED UNTIL AKOBO HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY PARK OR OTHERS AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN US.

8) ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE FIND SUITABLE PRIVATE OCCASION IN NEAR FUTURE TO EXPRESS TO AKOBO OUR APPRECIATION FOR HIS INITIATIVE AND EXPLAIN THAT CIRCUMSTANCES AT THAT TIME DID NOT WARRANT USING THE CHANNEL HE OFFERED. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, VISITS, COMMUNICATION LINES, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE024906
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: OLLIS:SEH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760038-0362
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976011/aaaaaadw.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ISIT TO U.S. BY NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER FOR PETROLEUM AND ENERGY
TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, NI, AN, US, MPLA, (AKOBO)
To: LAGOS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006